

# THE MEDICINE CHEST

## Overhauling and Stocking

By a Woman Doctor.

Now that "winter time" is here a suitable opportunity presents itself for overhauling the household medicine chest. It is well to see that it is adequately stocked before the cold weather brings with it its train of coughs, colds, rheumatism, and other ills. The first process is to see that all old bottles and bottles and boxes without labels or with illegible labels are destroyed. A conglomeration of half-used bottles of medicine prescribed for members of the family at various times soon accumulates. As medicines deteriorate in the course of time most of these bottles will be useless. No bottle or box without a label should be kept unless there is absolute certainty of its contents, as no risk of making mistakes should be taken.

The cupboard should be arranged in three departments or preferably three shelves if possible. One of these should be for dressings and instruments, another for drugs for external use, and the third for drugs for internal administration.

A clinical thermometer is, of course, the first essential in every medicine chest. Next to this is needed a pair of surgical scissors. These should be blunt-edged, and should be kept for use in the medicine chest only, and should never be used for any other purpose. A small pair of forceps, safety pins, a nasal douche, an eye-dropper, and a camel's hair brush are the other instruments which may be needed. The shelf for dressings should contain bandages of varying widths, white and boracic lint, medicated gauze, plaster, and oiled paper or oilskin for covering wet dressings. If there is room an elastic bandage in case of sprains and a packet of thermogene or capsicum tissue if there are sufferers from rheumatism in the house will be found useful additions.

First and foremost on the shelf for drugs for external use should be a bottle of iodine. The other drugs needed can be divided roughly into ointments, lotions, liniments and oils, and powders. It is essential that while the medicine cupboard should be well stocked it should not be overstocked. If possible only one remedy for each ailment should be included. Thus zinc and boracic ointment usually suffices for most sores and blisters that need ointment, and lead lotion is the only lotion that need be included, as it can be used for bruises, strains, and sprains. The only powders really necessary are boracic powder and alum. The latter is useful both for gargling purposes and as an eye wash and also as a dusting powder. There are four liniments and oils which are necessary to have at hand. Carron oil is needed in case of burns. Oil of wintergreen is useful for rheumatic joints, olive oil for massaging joints and muscles, and camphorated oil for rubbing on the chest. Friar's Balsam for inhalation and a tin of crushed linseed or antiphlogistine for poultices can complete the contents of this shelf.

Very few actual drugs for internal administration need to be kept in the medicine chest, as the majority of these are prescribed by the doctor. Formamint tablets for sore throats, quinine for colds, and a bottle of cough mixture are needed. Epsom's salts, castor oil, fluid magnesia, and a little soda bicarbonate in case of digestive troubles should be included. Aspirin or phenacetin and caffeine tablets should not be omitted. This shelf should also include a small bottle of brandy.

There are one or two useful hints to remember when fitting out a medicine cupboard. First and foremost every bottle and box should be carefully labelled, with directions for use on the label. Drugs for external use should be placed in special dark-coloured bottles and marked "Poison" on red labels. It is well to paste an inventory of the contents on the door of the cupboard. The cupboard should be kept locked and the key hung on a special hook away from the reach of children.